



THE LIFE SUPPORT NEWSLETTER



News for the men and women who served in the USAF or civilians who work in Government or industry in the Aircrew Life Support/Aircrew Flight Equipment business.

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Congratulations to Lt Col George Braue for being selected as the first Honorary Life Time Member of the SAFE Alamo Chapter for his outstanding contributions in the field of safety!

Congratulations to the new Life Support Chiefs since the last newsletter. Mike Valpey and Ted Poe at Headquarters ACC, Dwayne Roberts at JPAC, Rob Block at NGB Headquarters and Tracy Kopp at AFRES 10th AF.

There will also be some changes at Air Staff as Dave Chitwood retires early in 2008 and is scheduled to be replaced by Jeff Bingman. Gina Snowden has also scheduled her retirement and her replacement is Richard Bruck.

Good Luck and best wishes to both Dave and Gina. They leave a great legacy.

On the sad side we have lost four great Life Support Troops recently. Col/Doctor Bill Sears passed away in San Antonio in September. Doc Sears was recognized internationally as the authority on Aerospace Physiology and Human Factors of Aircrew Life Support Systems.

Honorary Chief Chris Bush left us in November to be with his Lord. What a special person Chris was to us all. He will be missed! MSGT Wade Portee provided the e-mail below.

Greetings,

I was deeply saddened when I read the news of SMSgt (Ret.) Chris Bush going home to the LORD. Chris was my first supervisor at Langley AFB, VA when I cross-trained into the Life Support career-field back in 1986. He was a great supervisor and a good friend. I have to say Chris was a mentor to me in the Life Support business. I had the opportunity to attend Chris' home-going celebration on Friday, November 16, 2007. The service was very moving and attended by many people, to include CMSGT (Ret.) Sample who gave some words of encouragement to Chris' family. Chris will be truly missed.

Chief Donahoo provided the following comment;

His passing is a tremendous loss for his family, the Aircrew Flight Equipment Community and the United States Air Force. His service to his country for over 34 years is a testament to the love and dedication of this great man.

Chief John Weir left us on Thanksgiving Day. Ray and Betty Blanchette took the

lead for the community and provided the below report:

To All Life Support,

What a great final send off for John! The Pinewood United Methodist Church was full and the service was fitting. Three of his former Pastors and a close friend eulogized the Celebration of this wonderful man's life. His integrity and his patriotism were constant themes throughout and his love of God, Family and Country were especially emphasized.

Lou was very appreciative of the beautiful floral spray from the Worldwide Life Support Community, which was there at the funeral home for the family private viewing. The Shaw Honor Guard did a fine job at the Pinewood Cemetery with the military honors ceremony.

We should all feel blessed that we knew John as a professional and as a friend. He will be missed for sure. He and John Shields are commiserating on the huge welcome planned for all of us at the final Life Support reunion.

Betty and I spoke with Lou at length at the cemetery. She mentioned how wonderful it was for her and John to go to the reunions and how thankful she was to be part of the Life Support community. John had suffered with lung cancer since July, a month after it had been diagnosed and fought bravely throughout the battle. He is now in a better place.

Betty and I feel privileged to have been able to represent all of you at John's final launch. His current pastor read the Air Force Hymn as part of his closing remarks, just before the 21 gun salute and the playing of Taps. May God bless Lou and her family as they work their way through this significant loss!

And from Jim Rooney:

A sad day. I, like many of you, worked for Chief Weir and received his professional support which was always spot on. Susie & I have enjoyed John & Lou's company at the Retirees Reunion for years. We have lost a fine man. Godspeed John Weir.

On December the 20th we lost Chief Art Wade after a battle with his health. Art was truly an icon of the community and Mr. Strategic Air Command to a lot of his friends. Art will also be remembered as the Official Photographer at all of the reunions. Art can best be described as a Gentleman! The below comments further note our respect for Art:

*Another icon of the community has passed away....a total shock to me! I just saw him at the reunion and he was looking great to me. What a gentleman...I always enjoyed being in his company.
Godspeed, Chief. Al Loving*

Skip Clawson provided:

Truer words have never been spoken. I know I got a card from Art last week and he mentioned he has been battling pneumonia but felt he was getting better and just needed to get his strength.

Rest in Peace Chief

And from Cal Crochet:

Art worked for me at HQ SAC during the late-60's, whereby, he was a true gentlemen; a great CHIEF and one who received the utmost respect from all within the AF life support community. Art will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Cal

Chief Al Cricks also lost his Father, Harry and provided the below to Al Loving:

I would like to personally thank the Air Force Life Support Community for the compassion extended at the loss of my father, William. He was very proud of my service and accomplishments within the Aircrew Life Support field. These accomplishments were a reflection of my father's work ethic. On behalf of the family, thank you for your personal condolences and for acting on behalf of the whole community. The floral arrangement was beautiful and noted by individual members of my family. The community's tradition of excellence is unmatched!

With sincere regards, Al

That's quite a lot of losses for our community but only one more reason for all to consider attending our annual reunions. John and Lou Weir attended and Art Wade never missed one. His annual reunion photos are treasures!

CHILI SEZ



Life Support Merger

Our career field was officially renamed Aircrew Flight Equipment on 1 Oct 07. With the new name came as new AFSC. The new number is 1P0X1 with the "1P" representing Aircrew Performance. In an e-mail received from Chief Chitwood, USAF Aircrew Life Support Career Field

Manager, they were thinking of naming it Aircrew Protection until the ACC/CV decided all that protection was getting in the way of performance and that the focus should be on enhancing aircrew performance instead of protection.

If the e-mail below is any indication, the merger seems to be going quite well.

I just visited the combined Survival Equipment and Aircrew Life Support complex at Holloman AFB and was greatly impressed in the operation being put together to support the F-22. SMS Gonzales (Survival Equipment background) has been selected to ramrod this location and I can not recall meeting anyone more motivated in Life Support.

Not only has he learned his new job quickly he studied our career field clear back to Personal Equipment days. If you find yourselves in the area I'm sure he'd spend his lunch hour showing you around just like he did for me. I wish him and all Aircrew Flight Equipment Superintendents great success in this endeavor. Herb Boughn

Life Support Jobs

The Air Force has posted a slew of anticipated Life Support jobs on the web site, USAJOBS. There are so many positions and locations listed that it looks as if the AF is converting active duty and ART positions to straight civilian. We thank TSgt (Ret) Charles Lovell for the heads up on this major announcement.

John Patti is also looking to hire two life supporters at Ft Rucker. To view the

announcements go to our web site and click on "Employment".

Get Well Soon

We wish to extend a get well soon to Mary Oost and Hank Counts who are all struggling with their health.

Chief Vernon Croft reports the following on Hank Counts:

I spoke a bit with Hank and Essie. Essie said that Hank was rather bad as he has had four strokes since last Easter and his dementia is now to the point that he no longer knows who she is. In my conversation with him I gathered that he did not know who I was based on his comments.

I did get Essie' e-mail address and asked if I could share it with you and she said it would be ok. Essie' e-mail address is: hank&essie@msncom

Best LSO I Ever Served With!

Tommy started highlighting LSOs a few newsletters ago and I think we should continue with it. If you would like to pay tribute to an outstanding LSO that you served with, please send it in. I know a darn good one who has come up with an excellent suggestion. See below.

Suggestions

Frank Provazano asked me to write this to remind you to put a request for all Life Supporters to come up with a narrative of their career it in the next news letter.

It never ceases to amaze the history associated with ACLS members. This AFSC is the most diversified one in the military the members are expected to be experts in

everything from PE to pouring cement to explosives.

We don't need just a list of assignments we need a narrative of what we did, how we did it, what we changed, things we saw. War stories!! Some examples:

During the reunion I spoke to many of ACLSers who were living history. Some joined the Army, ended up in the Army Air Corps then the Air Force by default. All had history to tell. Assigned to Fairfield Army station. No one knew where it was so they were given a RR/ TR to San Francisco and told to ask where it was once they got there. Another assigned to Malmstrom field only to find out it was a Russian run lend lease station. Another packing sanitized army uniforms into canisters only to find out they were being air dropped into Easter European country's to rebels. A Sgt finding out that you could make money in TO changes by submitting them under the Suggestion Program. A LSO submitting a suggestion to reduce staff cars and having senior officers use bicycles. Was told by the Wing CC ' Judas sold Christ down the drain for 20 pieces of silver, you sold the CC staff card for \$35', upon getting the award. Meeting the first WAF he'd ever seen. Having the first female assigned. Questions asked 'How did we (the country) end up here (politically)'. Hauling furniture around the flight line.

Every one of us has got funny, heartbreaking, heart stopping, dumb mistakes, and great inventions to put down on paper for future generations.

My kids asked me to write down some events in my military life and I ended up with 24 pages of one liners. If I can come up with 24 pages surly everyone has a story to tell.

We encourage all of you to sit down and put together a narrative of your life support career and send it to Maj (Ret) Looper Meyer at thelooper@att.net. Sometime in the future I will add a link to your name in our Assignment History file to your narrative.

Retired Chief Al Loving has suggested that we re-implement the active duty address and possibly assignment history lists. If interested, he wants active duty troops to send him the information for eventual posting on our web site. Al's e-mail address is aloving@cox.net.

Reunion

We are in the planning stages for next year's reunion and once again it's going to be in Laughlin, NV. This time we're going to the River Palms Hotel Resort/Casino. That's the hotel where we had our first reunion banquet back in 1996. Remember, it was next door to Harrah's? The dates for the reunion will be 29 Sep - 2 Oct 08. Unlike the last two reunions, this time there will be plenty activities scheduled such as bowling, movies, shows, river cruise, and our usual golf and pinochle tournaments. As always, more information about the reunion will be in our next newsletter.

Although this year's reunion raffle gifts were not a good as they were in the past, all the reunion attendees deserve a big pat on the back for their contributions. Bob Biggs contributed a beautiful bust of an Indian chief that he spent years on. The bust was put up for bid and the winning bid went to Jay Moseman. With the generous amount that Jay paid for the bust we were able to collect over \$900.

That money will be used to help pay for our web site and newsletters.

Below is an idea for a future reunion from Fred Cernetisch. Let us know how you feel about it.

What do you think of coming to Bettendorf Iowa for a reunion? They have a new hotel that has a skywalk into a river boat casino. We have the Rock Island Arsenal here that has a nice weapons museum, a boat lock observation tower on the Mississippi and a confederate cemetery from the civil war which is nicely maintained, all free at the arsenal island. Also, we can arrange a bus tour to Nauvoo Ill where the Mormons have restored their temple and many house and shops just like in the 1840s, only cost is a bus rental to get there and a lunch. Also the Amana Colonies are a short bus tour away. Galena Ill again a short bus tour is a town full of shops and set up like 100+ years ago. Many golf courses that would be cheaper than Nev, except for the John Deere Classic course, pro tournament setup. Also we have the John Deere headquarters and plants which have free tours. I can get prices for you and the weather here is nice in Sept and Oct. Since we are practically right in the middle of the US, travel would be equal for folks from both coasts. The cost for me to come to Vegas was 77 plus taxes from Moline Ill.

H. Koch & Sons Co.

1908-2007

2006 brought about the dismantling of H. Koch & Sons Co. So that we will never forget the great relationships we had over the years with our beloved friends, I asked former employee, John McNaughton to

supply us with the following history lesson.

H. Koch & Sons co. was founded in 1908 in San Francisco by a German immigrant, Herman Koch. Koch was a leatherworker by trade and made high quality wallets, handbags and later, suitcases.

During the 1920s and 30s, Koch manufactured steamer trunks for tourists crossing the Atlantic Ocean on the large liners of the day.

Following the Second World War, Koch became one of the first American companies to begin using the low pressure laminate process with fiberglass to fabricate carrying cases. Koch soon developed a reputation for making the strongest (and probably the heaviest) suitcases on the market. Many of the cases made in the early fifties are still in use today.

In 1951, Koch moved its operation from San Francisco to a new facility in Corte Madera, in Marin County, CA. At that time, the Company was recognized as having the largest manufacturing facility in California north of San Francisco.

During the Korean War, General Goddard of the newly formed US Air Force approached Koch about building cases for electronic measuring devices and cameras that would be parachuted to the ground for use in the atomic testing conducted at Johnston Island and the Eniwetok Atoll in the South Pacific. The cases were subjected to the atomic blasts and the only damage they incurred was in the form of the glass that adhered to them which was formed by the radiation of the sand they sat in. During this time-frame, the leadership of

Koch passed from Herman to his sons, Murray and William.

Later, Koch was called upon to produce the first fiberglass rigid seat survival kits (RSSK) used in the ejection seats which were installed in the Air Force's "Century Series" aircraft. In addition to those planes, Koch kits were used in such diverse aircraft as the F-4, F-15, B-52, F-5, T-38, OV-10, A-7 and U2. Many of these kits are still in use with new kits being produced as recently as this year.

With its new business in the military marketplace taking off, Koch's engineers developed a new product. In response to the numerous life-threatening problems encountered by both the Air Force and the Navy with the existing parachute canopy releases and lap belt assemblies, Koch designed a completely new line of release assemblies. The aeronautical hardware produced by Koch in the 1960s and 1970s became the first of the famed, "Koch Fittings". These devices were used as parachute harness releases, lap belt releases, quick release units for swimmer's harnesses, cargo releases and in a number of other applications. Continuous improvements have been made to the devices and many have seen service in excess of twenty years.

Koch then expanded its military products with such innovations as the first successfully vacuum packaged life rafts, emergency sleeping bags and Arctic clothing for use in its survival kits.

Further diversification led to the successful development of products such as the Helicopter Emergency Egress Lighting System (HEELS) and rotary and fixed wing personnel restraint systems (incorporating

the highly acclaimed MA-16 Inertia Reel of Koch's design).

Most recently, Koch produced a restraint system for ground vehicles (HMMWV and others). Prior to the installation of Koch's system, a number of personnel were seriously injured or killed because they found the existing restraints too cumbersome to use.

In 1966, the Koch family sold the Company to Gulf+Western Industries, Inc. The Company was moved to Anaheim, CA in 1974. In 1985, Gulf+Western sold Koch to the Wickes Company. From 1992 until the sale to Cobham PLC, Koch was privately held.

In 2004, Koch's owners decided to put the Company up for sale. In July 2005, Koch was sold to Cobham PLC of the United Kingdom. Cobham management decided to place Koch under the management of one of their other companies, Conax Florida Corporation. At first, Koch employees were told that the Company would continue business as usual, but almost immediately afterwards, Conax decided to transfer several of Koch's product lines to their facility in St. Petersburg, FL. In the fall of 2006, it was announced that Koch's Anaheim, CA facility would be closed and that all product lines would be moved to Florida except for the survival kits, which would be moved to another Cobham company, Carleton Technologies of Orchard Park, NY.

In February, 2007, approximately twenty months shy of its one hundredth anniversary; H. Koch & Sons Co. closed its doors.

Good luck to all the former employees of H. Koch & Sons and thank you for your

contributions to life support. We will never forget you!

Congratulations!

Congratulations to Tommy and Polly Tompkins who recently celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary (*Tommy didn't know that I knew this and it has been added to the newsletter without his knowledge.*).

Dedication

We dedicate this issue to the memory of Col Bill Sears and the two former HQ TAC Life Support troops that we lost in November, Chief John Weir and SMSgt Chris Bush. Big John as some of us called him will always be remembered by me as the gentle giant. Although it was only on a temporary basis, I'll always remember Chris as the only SMSgt that I know of to run a "Tactical Air Force MAJCOM". And last but not least, we dedicate this issue to the memory of the legendary SAC Chief, Art Wade who in the minds of every SAC life supporter was as famous as the creator of the personal equipment/life support career field, Mr. SAC himself, Gen Curtis Lemay. To those of us left behind who will miss Col Sears, SMSgt Bush, Chief Weir and Chief Wade, let this dedication stand as a tribute to them and to all our other friends who have passed from this life in recent years.